



Mountains Receive First Snow

The Wasatch Back mountains received their first snowfall Monday night. Heber Valley residents awoke to a dense fog, blanketing the area.

9-23-98

Olympic venues will be put to test

By Ray Grass

Deseret News outdoor editor

Utah's Olympic venues will be properly tested this winter with the first big push toward the 2002 Games.

Olympic venues will be the site of 11 existing or new events, including five World Cup championships, during the 1998-99 winter.

The first will be the traditional opening of World Cup skiing with America's Opening at Park City Mountain Resort. This year, like last, the event will involve both the men's and women's slalom and giant slalom. And, like last year, the event has been moved one week forward from what was a traditional Thanksgiving race. The dates are Nov. 19-22.

Many of the racers involved in this event will be back for 2002.

The bobsled World Cup circuit will visit the Utah Winter Sports Park with the two-man event on Nov. 27 and four-man event on Nov. 28.

Here, too, many of the sliders will be returning in two years. Which, says Bear Hollow officials, makes these races all the more important. Strategy and familiarity with the track are key elements in gold-medal runs.

The somewhat smaller women's bobsled World Cup will also make an appearance this winter. The women are trying desperately to be recognized as an official Olympic sport in 2002 and are hoping to make a good impression.

The fourth World Cup event will

be the men's and women's skeleton on Dec. 5-6. Few Utahns are familiar with skeleton. It was actually an Olympic sport before bobsled but fell from favor and lost its standing. Like the women's bobsledders, skeleton is bidding to become an official Olympic sport again.

Instead of riding the track feet-first and flat on their backs as they do in the luge, skeleton sliders go head-first and ride on their stomachs on a sled only slightly larger than a cafeteria tray.

The bobsled teams will return for a second major event on Jan. 24-30, with America's Cup.

The first major snowboard event in Utah will be at Park City for the fifth and final international World Cup event from Jan. 31 to Feb. 7.

In addition to the international events, there will also be five U.S. championships in figure skating, luge, bobsled, alpine and freestyle skiing, all at Olympic venues.

For the first time since 1990, the U.S. Figure Skating Championships will be at the Delta Center, which will become the Olympic Skating Arena for three weeks in 2002, Feb. 7-14.

The luge championships will be Feb. 20 at the Winter Sports Park, and two weeks later the U.S. bobsled championships will be held.

Skiing will be the last of the Olympic previews. The U.S. Alpine and Freestyle Championships will be held at the respective venues — Park City Mountain Resort (GS), Deer Valley (slalom) and Snowbasin (downhill), with the

freestyle at Deer Valley and the Winter Sports Park. Dates are March 19-24.

According to the Salt Lake Olympic Committee, between 15 and 20 pre-Olympic events will come to Salt Lake before 2002, which should give officials time to iron out the bugs and Utahns time to become spectator friendly with the athletes and events.

□ □ □

While on the subject, icing crews will begin working on the bobsled/luge track on Oct. 3, weather permitting.

The goal, says Randy Montgomery, executive director of the Utah Sports Authority, is to have it open and ready for practice on Oct. 12.

Public rides, however, will be delayed for about two weeks.

Those interested in making reservations for the high-speed, shake-'em-up public bobsled run can begin calling Oct. 1 at 9 a.m. (435-658-4200). Last year the bobsled seats were gone by mid-December.

Public rides in the four-man bobsled and the one-person Ice Rockets will begin in early November.

Until then, the park is still open for those wanting to watch freestyle training in the swimming pool. The nice thing about the latest training is that because of the cooler temperatures the athletes are wearing very colorful wet and dry suits for training, which simply adds to the beauty of the fall colors.